A Finger in Every Dike

RISE TO GLOBALISM: American Foreign Policy Since 1938. *By Stephen E. Ambrose. Penguin Books. 352 pp. Paper $2.45.*

COLD WAR AND COUNTERREVOLUTION: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy. *By Richard J. Walton. The Viking Press. 250 pp. $7.95.*

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During the past ten years, it has become much more widely accepted that the cold war was not a Russian invention. Cold-war "revisionism" has made its impact. The shock of the Pentagon Papers has been eased for many by acquaintance with the historical analysis of such scholars as William Appleman Williams, Gabriel Kolko, David Horowitz and Walter LaFeber. Yet until now, there has been no overall synthetic account that tells what each postwar administration did and also provides a critical analysis of its policies.

This task has been realized by Stephen E. Ambrose's *Rise to Globalism.* As the title suggests, Ambrose is concerned with the developing globalist conception of America's role abroad. He realizes that this posture developed from the need to avoid a postwar depression by achieving new foreign markets—a problem, since "much of the proposed market place was closed." Ambrose sees postwar foreign policy as formulated particularly to prevent nationalization of American-owned property abroad, which meant an effort to create "an open door everywhere." The globalist shift was not mindless. "Politicians looked for areas in which American influence could dominate; the businessmen looked for profitable markets and new sources of raw materials; the military looked for overseas bases," and America began a "program of expansion that had no inherent limits." This basic stance was developed by the administration of Harry S. Truman; it is in its account of these years that Mr. Ambrose's book makes its most significant contribution.

By 1947, Truman and his advisers "saw communist involvement in every attack on the status quo anywhere and convinced themselves that the Kremlin was at the center of a master plot to conquer the world." To deal with what was regarded as a worldwide threat, they undertook to arm Europe. The program had to surmount an initial obstacle: the American populace was not yet ready for a new holy crusade, and Truman needed large economic and military largesse from Congress to meet the supposed threat.

The issue Truman found to get this funding was Greece, as the United States prepared to move into the areas from which Britain was forced to withdraw. But to mask their real purpose, Truman had to present his intervention as a step on behalf of worldwide freedom. Hence the Truman Doctrine was devised, and it "defined American policy for the next twenty years. Whenever and wherever an anti-communist government was threatened, by indigenous insurgents, foreign invasion, or even diplomatic pressure . . . the United States would supply political, economic, and most of all military aid." For Truman the terms " 'free peoples' and 'anti-communist' were assumed to be synonymous." Once the premise was accepted, the enormous interventions of future administrations were but a step away.

It was Korea, however, that allowed the Truman administration to finally achieve the enormous defense budget called for in the secret and influential National Security Council resolution 68. The drafters of NSC 68 asked for a $35 billion budget. This task Truman considered hopeless, calculating that a reluctant Congress would grant at most $17 billion. At least, until Korea. The crisis allowed Truman to put the recommendations of NSC 68 into effect. Ambrose is emphatic on one point: the Korean War, whichever side started it, was a boon—politically, economically and socially—to American imperialism.

As for the war itself, Ambrose corrects major errors in our understanding of it. First, he points out that the U.S. authorities knew that North Korea was planning to invade across the 38th Parallel. In fact, the State Department had prepared a resolution condemning North Korean aggression days before the attack. But unlike I. F. Stone, who argued in his book that Syngman Rhee started the war with covert American support, Ambrose writes that the North Korean action was "too strong, too well coordinated, and too successful to be a counterattack." He believes that the North Koreans simply calculated that they could overrun the peninsula before the United States could reinforce South Korea. Moreover, American officials had already defined South Korea as outside the U.S. defense perimeter, and the North Koreans may very well have doubted that America would move in.

Second, Ambrose presents a major revision of standard accounts of the MacArthur-Truman dispute. Truman's assumption that American bombers alone would force the North Koreans back was quickly shattered. American troops were then brought in, supposedly only to restore the border at the 38th Parallel. But by August, the policy was to reunify Korea under the aegis of the South.

Now, the policy of crossing the 38th Parallel and unifying Korea *was not* MacArthur's. Rather, it was the new policy of the Truman administration. The President's advisers argued that China would not intervene on Korea's behalf. Quoting from instructions issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to MacArthur, Ambrose writes that stepping beyond containment "came after full discussion and consideration in the highest levels of the American government. Truman later implied, and millions believed, that MacArthur had gone ahead on his own, that it was the general in the field, not the government at home, that had changed the political objective of the war in the middle of the conflict. Such was never the case. Truman, with the full concurrence of the State and Defense Departments and the Joint Chiefs, made the decision to liberate North Korea." Much later, after MacArthur's February 1951 offensive, Truman moved away from the objective of a military victory. But that policy had itself arisen from the decision to favor containment, which actually meant war mobilization, a high defense budget, and a permanent cold-war footing for the nation. That is the significance of Truman's flat rejection of Clement Attlee's plea for peace in Asia.

In contrast to Truman and the policy of permanent intervention, Dwight D. Eisenhower appears in Ambrose's book as a President struggling nobly to minimize the effects of the cold war. While his administration engaged in the rhetoric of liberation, the reality was more often a restrained version of Truman's containment. Despite John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower was more flexible than his predecessor. The Republicans may have rattled the saber, but "they also shut down the Korean War, cut corporate taxes, and reduced the size of the armed forces. Despite intense pressure and great temptation, they entered no wars. They were willing to supply material, on a limited scale, to others . . . but they would not commit American boys to the struggle."

By 1955, the decision to go to the summit had undercut the failure of Re-

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